

# Allegories of the Present: Curriculum Development in a Culture of Narcissism and Presentism\*

## Günü Kurtarma ve Narsisizm Kültüründe Eğitim Programı Tasarımı: Şimdinin Resmi

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### *Abstract*

Pinar recasts curriculum development and design from the sphere of the procedural – that is, principles and steps to follow regardless of the specificities of place and time – to ongoing forms of intellectual engagement with one’s distinctive situation, however complex and contested that situation is, however tragic one’s history, however conflicted the present might be. Such curriculum development requires a different set of concepts and practices from those many know take for granted, e.g. objectives to be implemented through curriculum design and teaching for the sake of assessment. Instead of objectives to be assessed, Pinar positions as primary the historical moment, situated as history is in national history and culture. In North America, this means includes articulating how the present becomes embodied in individual subjectivities, and how one might study both through academic knowledge in complicated conversation with those in classrooms.

*Key words:* Allegories, analogy, curriculum development, narcissism, subjectivity

### *Öz*

Pınar, program geliştirme çalışmalarını yer ve zaman gözetilmeksizin ele alınan biçimsel uygulamalardan, bireyin karmaşık ve tartışmaya açık ayırt edici durumu, trajik geçmişi ve çatışmalı bugününün süregelen entelektüel yapılarla ilişkisi boyutuna taşımaktadır. Böyle bir uygulama hedeflerin ölçme-değerlendirme amaçlı hazırlandığı gibi düşünceleri kabul edenlerden farklı kavramlar ve yöntemler talep etmektedir. Hedeflerin değerlendirilmesi yerine Pınar milli tarih ve kültürde yer alan tarihi anları ilk sıraya koymaktadır. Kuzey Amerika’da bu yöntem şimdinin bireyin öznelliğinde nasıl şekillendiğini ve bireyin akademik bilgisiyle karmaşık diyaloglarda geçmişi ve şimdiki birlikte nasıl irdelediğini kapsar.

*Anahtar sözcükler:* Alegori (kinaye), analogi (benzerlik), program geliştirme, narsizm (özseverlik), öznellik

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## Introduction

In the United States, we have suffered a history of curriculum development predicated primarily on functionality. Over the past century there have been several such formulations – each is associated with a key theoretician (Jackson, 1992) – that link the curriculum to the economy and to society. In both cases these links are future-bound, although curriculum conservatives – focused on the ancient languages and cultures – did survive in the U.S. through the 1920s, resurfacing briefly (mostly rhetorically) in the 1980s. To achieve these functional objectives, curriculum development became primarily procedural and systematized, starting with objectives, and thanks to Ralph Tyler, ending with assessment. In linking objectives to assessment, teaching was reduced to implementation.

Severed from schools by the Kennedy Administration's 1960s national curriculum reform, curriculum development as an academic specialization gave way (in the U.S.) to understanding curriculum (Pinar, 2008). Curriculum reform gave way to concern not with the intellectual content of the curriculum (as it tended to be in the 1960s national curriculum reform) but with so-called standards during the 1980s. The rhetorical preoccupation with standards gave way to accountability since the 2001 inauguration of George W. Bush (Ravitch, 2010). Curriculum reform has been replaced by what I call school deform, in which the centerpiece of the school – its curriculum – is rendered only a means to an end: student scores on standardized tests (Pinar, 2012a).

While globalization has accelerated trends toward curricular standardization – driven by presumably culture-free, so-called skills-based competencies called for by the so-called global marketplace – it has hardly expunged what is distinctive in local, regional, and national life. Even the same curriculum concepts connote different realities given the distinctiveness of our national and regional situations, and in five – two of which are now ongoing – studies I have attempted to portray this fact. While a curriculum of functionality driven by exams was instituted in post-Apartheid South Africa, for instance, it was perceived (at least at first) not as the handmaiden of international corporations and right-wing politicians (as in fact it is in the U.S.) but of democratization and black empowerment (Pinar, 2010). In Brazil, in the large cities, a tripartite jurisdictional structure (federal, state, municipal) not necessarily coordinated with itself, enables teachers opportunities for refashioning the curriculum according to their specific situations. This complexity of jurisdiction has contributed to sophisticated curriculum field structured by a distinctive set of curriculum concepts, such as *enunciation* and the *quotidian* (Pinar, 2011). The history of curriculum studies in Mexico tragically different, despite the heroic efforts of intellectually sophisticated scholars to rethink their circumstances (Pinar 2012b). Projects in China and India are now underway.

It is important to acknowledge national history and culture (and to also acknowledge that these are themselves contested concepts and realities) in order to understand school curriculum and the academic field that studies and develops it. Today I offer you one way to recast curriculum development and design from the realm of the procedural – that is, principles and steps to follow no matter where you are – to ongoing forms of intellectual engagement with one's distinctive situation, however complex and contested that situation is, however tragic one's history, and stressful the present might be. Such curriculum development requires a different set of concepts and practices from those many of us know so well, e.g. objectives to be implemented through curriculum design and teaching for the sake of assessment. Instead of objectives to be assessed, we might think about the historical moment, including how the present becomes embodied in our individual subjectivities, and how we might study both through academic knowledge in conversation with those around us. I realize that such language derives from culturally specific traditions and addresses nationally specific situations, but that acknowledgment is for me part of the rationale for curriculum development, design, and research situated in and addressed to the particular, in part through studying larger circles of influence: the regional, national, and global situations.

So what I describe to you today is less addressed to the country where I work – Canada – than it is to the country of my birth and residence, the United States. Most recently the problems of political polarization and economic destabilization structure the present moment there. While each of these has its own history and complexity, I link both to what I discern as deeper interrelated problems of presentism and narcissism in American culture, themselves intertwined with the crisis of advanced capitalism. Allow me to explain.

While U. S. historian Christopher Lasch's (1978) portrait of what he termed "the culture of narcissism" seems overdrawn it is, in my judgment, largely accurate. "The intense subjectivity of modern work, exemplified even more clearly in the office than in the factory," Lasch (1978, 102) observed, "causes men and women to doubt the reality of the external world and to imprison themselves... in a shell of protective irony." Exhausted by an unrelenting daily psychological intensity and an acute, even physical, sense of threat, many retreat from a public sphere that no longer seems safe, let alone supportive or worthy of their emotional investments. In the apparent safety of private life, however, many discover no solace. "On the contrary," Lasch (1978: 27) notes, "private life takes on the very qualities of the anarchic social order from which it supposed to provide a refuge."

With no place left to hide, many retreat into—and, Lasch argues, become lost in—themselves. The psychoanalytic term for this personality disturbance is *narcissism*, not to be confused with being egotistical or selfish (see Lasch 1984: 18). Recoiling from meaningful engagement in the world, the privatized self atrophies—Lasch (1984) uses the term *minimal* to denote that contraction of the self narcissism necessitates—and becomes disabled from distinguishing sharply between self and other. The past and future disappear in an individualistic obsession with psychic survival in the present. As Lasch (1978: xvi) suggests: "The narcissist has no interest in the future because, in part, he has so little interest in the past." How might we teach to restore temporality – a sharp sense of the past, enabling discernment of the present and foreshadowings of the future – to the complicated conversation that is the school curriculum? My answer is allegory, a concept enabling us to understand, and engage in, subjectively situated, historically attuned curriculum development and design.

Etymologically, "allegory" means to "speak publicly in an assembly." This definition forefronts its pedagogical and communicative nature. A speech at once concrete and abstract, allegory tells a specific story that hints at a more general significance. Its characters are at once particular and symbolic, simultaneously historical and metahistorical, even mythological. Understanding curriculum allegorically self-consciously incorporates the past into the present, threaded through one's subjectivity.

Allegory acknowledges academic knowledge as important for its own sake, even as it implies its educational significance. Allegory underscores that our individual lives are structured by ever widening circles of influence: from family through friends to our fellow citizens, all of whom personify culture, symbolize society, embody history. But allegory's movements are not only outward, they are inward, as allegory provokes reflection on, say, the sciences not only as specific academic disciplines with distinctive intellectual histories and present circumstances, but also as social, in the public interest. Science is subjective as well, however subtextual and indirectly subjectivity is expressed (Shapin, 2010).

Study enables one to articulate the singularity of public forms, requiring one to discern their histories and present associations. Study, then, becomes sensible not in an "environment," the long-time term of preference for a social and behavioral science that has too often stripped History from its efforts to understand what it observes. Rather, study proceeds in situation. As Madeleine Grumet (1978: 281) pointed out decades ago, "environment" implies a blank slate, without history and empty of human intention, while "situation" specifies how what we confront is filled by legacy, meaning, and aspiration.

And while it is no metaphysical bedrock, nevertheless it is each of us - the "I" - who testifies to the reality within and around us. "[N]either neither transcendent nor in process of self-realization," Roberts (1995: 7) explains, each of us (as individuals, as collectivities) "is rather bound up with some specific

situation that is historical." I endorse the concept of allegory because it forefronts both History and questions of its representation as central to understanding self and society.

Historical facts are primary, but it is their capacity to invoke our imagination that marks them as allegorical. Their meanings are not confined to the past; they leak into our experience of the present. Those meanings are to be articulated, in solitude through study, with others in classrooms and online, but such facts cannot be definitive, as they do not belong to the present. Bringing the past into the present while rigorously refusing to conflate the two incurs that "creative tensionality" (Aoki, 2005 [1985/1991] : 232) inherent in a historical sensibility, or what Peter Seixas (2004) terms "historical consciousness." Such a sensibility enables us to be attuned to the specific while not losing sight of its antecedents and associations.

For Walter Benjamin, Rauch (2000: 186) reminds, allegory was a "model to represent the historical moment in terms of how a text affects us as readers even though we cannot determine its meaning." Such a model derived from Benjamin's conviction that the cultivation of historical sensibility depended in part on the literariness of language and "its redemptive or memorial capacity in rhetorical structures" (2000, 186). Those structures are aesthetic of course, but what accords them immediacy and meaning is their saturation by the subjectivity of those who study them, whether in solitude or in assembly. Through allegory we can build passages from the particularity of our situations to the alterity of others. For Benjamin, Rauch (2000: 213) suggests, history became accessible through allegory.

It is the reciprocity, then, between subjectivity and history that structures allegory, which is why school curriculum guidelines must never be more than guidelines. Subjectively situated, historically attuned teachers must be free to follow wherever their imaginations and instincts lead them, acutely aware of the disciplinary knowledge which structures their ongoing inquiry and testimony. Like speech, allegory is not only self-referential; it extends beyond itself to comment on, to connect to, what is past in the present. An allegory-of-the-present combines the uniqueness and authenticity that Benjamin associated with the "aura" of an individually crafted work of art with the tradition such subjectively saturated art incorporates. The teacher is in this sense an artist and complicated conversation is the teacher's medium.

Allegory, then, achieves significance through its "combinatory structure" (Rauch 2000: 188), through both its internal elements (how the story that is told *is* told) and its positioning in disciplinary, subjective and social structures. Rauch (2000: 231 n. 7) thinks of these allegories as "hieroglyphs," as "fragmentary remnants of historic cultural context which is lost" the juxtaposition of which can create a "chaotic" image (Benjamin's "dialectical image") of one's "historical experience." Teachers and students themselves can decide how much "chaos" and how much "continuity" is appropriate, both intellectually, and in making learning psychologically manageable. As teachers know, intellectual labor is also an emotional undertaking.

Allegory begins in the teacher's study, where it is transposed into curriculum design, or less formally, teaching (not necessarily "lesson") plans, as what we choose to start classroom dialogue. It might be helpful to the teacher to reflect on what her or his intentions are, but "objectives" are hardly primary concerns. What matters is how complicated the conversation becomes. Allegory "ends" in what students make of such knowledge, a fate hardly removed from the province of the teacher but never definitively dependent on the teacher. Even the most creative and provocative lessons can fall flat, as anyone knows. Attempting to force students' engagement (let alone learning) becomes autocratic if not mediated by the subjective knowledge teachers have of the individuals in their classroom. Moreover, what students make of their study may not be known, and then only by the students themselves, for years. Specific "core standards" such those enforced by the Obama Administration (Lewin 2010, July 21) – with the expectation that these will then be learned by students because teachers have taught them – amount to magical thinking, an example of how denial and obfuscation have predominated in U.S. school reform since the 1983 *A Nation at Risk*.

What determines when juxtaposed elements that comprise the curricular “hieroglyph” stretch credulity? There are logical relations between elements that cannot be violated at whim, but even apparently illogical relations can become credible when contextualized specifically. The great Weimar cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer (1995: 234) pointed out:

The more reality opens itself up to man, the more foreign to him the average world with its distorted conceptual petrifications becomes. He recognizes that a boundless plentitude of qualities inhabits each phenomenon, and that each is subject to widely differing laws. But the more he becomes aware of the many-sidedness of things, the more it becomes possible for him to relate them to each other.

In that first sentence, Kracauer is acknowledging what has become in our era a commonplace: that reality is socially constructed. Of course, that hardly means that it is immaterial or always elusive (even if finally mysterious), but it does underline that everyday life is not only what it seems, that ordinariness contains and expresses elements not on the surface, elements that, despite their apparent difference, could also be related to each other, although not necessarily due to contiguity.

Difference becomes intelligible within relations of resemblances, as Kaja Silverman (2009: 74) specifies through the concept of *analogy*, that which “links us to other beings – what makes all of our stories part of the same great book. But analogy is also internal to our own being – what connects the person we were yesterday with the slightly different person we are today.” I emphasize that these two – sociality and subjectivity – are themselves analogous. As teachers, individuation denotes the developmental – and professional - undertaking of sculpting the specificity of our individuality, however informed it inevitably is by sociality, through study and participation in the complicated conversation that is the curriculum. In so participating, Silverman (2009: 65) makes clear, we

connect our lives to many others – to lives that are over, and to lives that have not yet begun, as well as to those proximate to us in time and space. Rather than a self-contained volume, authorized by us, our history is only one chapter in an enormous and ever-expanding book, whose overall meaning and shape we cannot even begin to grasp, let alone determine.... This volume is written from the inside, through the analogies we acknowledge and those we refuse.

Working from within, specifying the singularity of situations through threading the needle that is our individual subjective experience, we affirm resemblance through difference. Simultaneously abstract and concrete, past and present, such pedagogical labor is allegorical, communication informed by academic knowledge.

While undistorted and unconstrained speech may not be possible, communication through understanding is. As James W. Carey (1992: 25) realized: “reality is brought into existence, is produced, by communication—by, in short, the construction, apprehension, and utilization of symbolic forms.” The reconstruction of reality is, in this sense, intellectual labor. We cannot know what intellectual labor will bring; like the future, serious and creative thought is often enigmatic, sometimes contradictory, even incalculable. While curriculum as complicated conversation in the service of social and self-reflective understanding will transform the present, it will not do so in predictable ways, certainly not according to politicians’ often self-serving and ideology-laden agendas.

Curriculum theory and the complicated conversation it supports seek the truth of the present, not its manipulation for job creation. Economics is an important curricular topic, but it becomes so in the name of understanding and critique, not entrepreneurship. Intellectual agency is preferable to entrepreneurship. Curriculum conceived as conversation invites students to encounter themselves and the world they inhabit (and that inhabits them) through academic study, through academic knowledge, popular culture, all threaded through their own lived experience. Forefronting test scores on standardized test scores cuts this thread.



How does quantifying educational experience *end* educational experience? Even private “thought is predominately public and social,” Carey (1992: 28) reminds. Standardized tests undermine those lived links between the spoken word (the classroom is by definition a public square) and the inner conversation (carried on in rooms of one’s own). When guided by a thoughtful, imaginative, and knowledgeable teacher (these are not specifiable behaviors!), connecting the two spheres—inner and public speech—supports subjective and social reconstruction. Why are these reciprocally related processes central to the education of the public? “Reality,” Carey (1992: 30) explains,

must be repaired for it consistently breaks down: people get lost physically and spiritually, experiments fail, evidence counter to the representation is produced, mental derangement sets in – all threats to our models of and for reality that lead to intense repair work.

Curricular standardization – especially when accomplished by standardized testing - is not repair work. By silencing subjectivity and ensuring cultural conformity, the standardized test-making industry and the politicians who fund it stop communication and enforce mimicry. The spontaneity of conversation disappears in the application of “cognitive skills” to solve conceptual puzzles unrelated to either inner experience or public life. Censored is that self-reflexivity dialogical encounter invites.

Under such political circumstances, the curricular task becomes the recovery of memory and history in ways that psychologically allow individuals to reenter politically the public sphere in privately meaningful and ethically committed ways. The public sphere becomes the “commons,” not another place to plunder for profit. How to substitute social and subjective reconstruction for economic exploitation in a historical moment consumed by the latter? It is not obvious (let alone easy) of course, but I suggest that by studying the past students can begin to free themselves from the present. The great Italian filmmaker and public intellectual Pier Paolo Pasolini understood:

Now I prefer to move through the past, precisely because I believe that the past is the only force to contest the present; it is an aberrant form, but all the values that were the values which formed us—with all that made them atrocious, with their negative aspects—are the ones that are capable of putting the present into crisis. (quoted in Rumble 1996: 58)

Subjective reconstruction requires reactivating the past in the present, rendering the present past. This is the labor of allegory.

Such allegorical labor is not only intrasubjective, as it precipitates social engagement. Such complicated conversation within oneself and with others reinvigorates “the oral tradition, with its emphasis on dialogue and dialectic, values and philosophical speculation, as the countervailing culture to the technological culture of sensation and mobility” (Carey 1992: 135). Part of the project of *currere* – curriculum conceived as a verb - is to contradict presentism by self-consciously cultivating the temporal structure of subjectivity, insisting on the distinctiveness and simultaneity of past, present, and future, a temporal complexity in which difference does not dissolve onto a flattened never-ending “now,” but is stretched as it is spoken, reconstructing the present as temporally and spatially differentiated. Presentism not only erases time but space as well, as place becomes nowhere in particular, cyberspace (Chun, 2006: 43). In the midst of such a cultural calamity, the education of the public requires, above all, the cultivation of historicity.

To enact curriculum conceived as subjectively situated, historically attuned conversation means associating academic knowledge with the individual him or herself, teaching not only what is, for instance, historical knowledge, but also suggesting its possible consequences for the individual’s self-formation in the historical present, allowing that knowledge to shape the individual’s coming to social form. Doing so is an elusive and ongoing threading of subjectivity through the social forms and intellectual constructs we discover through study, reanimating our original passions through acting in

the world. "What we do in school in the classroom," Alan Block (2009: 73) suggests, "is to forever pursue lost objects," and "this pursuit and effort is both an personal and a communal obligation." In fact, he adds, addressing teachers directly, "until we find our own lost articles and we ought not to undertake assisting others" (2009: 77). I suggest this search can be conducted *through* assisting others.

### Conclusion

*[E]very subject finds herself obligated to search for the future in the past.*

—Kaja Silverman (2000: 49)

Procedures and principles remain important, but unless we can think our way through the structures of the present, we cannot find our way to the future. Reactivating the past reconstructs the present so we can find the future. In the United States, that means rejecting the Obama Administration's school reform initiative – the so-called *Race to the Top* – and encouraging teachers to engage in an ethics of intransigence. They must appear to comply with federal and state guidelines, but, I suggest, professional ethics precedes politics. As Franz Rosenzweig reminds us from the past: "vocation is more primeval than condition" (Mosès 2009 [1992]: 29). That affirmation of our calling takes historically shifting, culturally specific, and subjectively situated forms. We share one planet yes, and the cultivation of cosmopolitanism (Pinar 2009) – tolerance of, even hospitality toward difference and dissent – is key to our survival as a species, but these require not curricular standardization but curricular differentiation, as working through the legacies of the past enables finding the future. "Working through" is, in Dominick LaCapra's (2009: 54) cumbersome but clarifying definition,

is in general an articulatory practice with political dimensions: to the extent one works through trauma and its symptoms on both personal and sociocultural levels, one is able to distinguish between past and present and to recall in memory that something happened to one (or one's people) back then while realizing that one is living here and now with openings to the future.

It is such complicated conversation – acknowledging the trauma of historical experience while never ceasing to articulate its character and effects – that reactivates the past in the present.

The key curriculum question - *what knowledge is of most worth?* - is animated by ethics, history, and politics. As such, it is an ongoing question, as the immediacy of the historical moment, the particularity of place, and the singularity of one's own individuality become articulated through the subject matter – history, poetry, science, technology – that one studies and teaches. Expressing one's subjectivity through academic knowledge is how one links the lived curriculum with the planned one, how one demonstrates to students that scholarship can speak to them, how in fact scholarship can enable them to speak. No empty abstraction invoked to enforce compliance now for the sake of a time yet to come, the future is here and now. Finding the future in an era of pervasive presentism and narcissism is not obvious. In fact, the future will not be found in front of us at all, but in back of us. Reactivating the past reconstructs the present so we can find the future. Such an allegorical undertaking signifies strategies of curriculum development and design today.

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## Geniş Özet

### Günü Kurtarma ve Narsisizm Kültüründe Eğitim Programı Tasarımı: Şimdinin Resmi

Amerika'da işlevselliğin çok ön plana çıktığı bir eğitim programı geliştirme süreci yaşanmıştır. Geçen yüzyılda her biri belli bir kuramcı tarafından toplumsal ve ekonomik hayatla ilişkilendirilen çeşitli formül oluşturma gayretleri olmuştur (Jackson 1992). Her ne kadar eski dil ve kültürler üzerine yoğunlaşan muhafazakâr eğitim programı tasarımcıları 1920'lere kadar varlıklarını korumuş ve 80'lerde en azından etkili bir biçimde tekrar ortaya çıkmış olsalar da; söz konusu iki ilişkilendirme biçimi de geleceğe yöneliktir. Bu işlevsel hedefleri gerçekleştirebilmek amacıyla Ralph Tyler ile birlikte eğitim programlarının geliştirilmesi hedeflerin belirlenmesiyle başlayan ve değerlendirmeye sona eren daha sistematik bir hal almıştır. Hedeflerle değerlendirmeyi ilişkilendirebilmek ve tutarlı kılabilmek için öğretim sadece bir uygulama haline dönüşmüştür.

İçinde yaşadığı ve kapitalizm krizinden dolayı iyice iç içe geçen günü kurtarma düsturu ve narsisizmden kaynaklanan daha derin ve girift başka sorunlardan dolayı ortaya çıktığına inanıyorum. Kişi kendi içine çekiliyor ve Lasch'e göre kendi içlerinde kayboluyorlar. Psikoanalizde bu tür kişilik bozukluğu için narsisizm ifadesi kullanılmaktadır, tabii bunun egoist ve bencil olmayla karıştırılmaması gerekir (see Lasch 1984, 18). Dünyayla kurulan anlamlı iletişimden mahrum kalan birey gittikçe kötüleşir ve kendisi ile diğerleri arasındaki farkı ayırt etme becerisi bozulur. Psişik bir şekilde sürekli şu anda yaşama gibi bireysel bir takıntıyla geçmiş ve gelecek ortadan kaybolur. Şimdinin ve geleceğin öngörülerinin anlaşılmasını kolaylaştıran keskin bir geçmiş anlayışı kazandırmadan zaman kavramını nasıl yeniden yerine koyarız ve oradan da daha karmaşık bir konu olan eğitim programı konusuna nasıl geçeriz? Öznel bir yeri ve de tarihi bir geçmişi olan Eğitim programı tasarlama ve geliştirme konusunu anlamamıza ve üzerinde çalışmamıza yardımcı olacak cevabım alegori / kinaye.

Alegori kendisi için akademik bilginin önemli olduğunu kabul eder ve eğitsel açıdan da değerli olduğunun altını çizer. Bireysel hayatlarımızın durmadan genişleyen etki çemberleriyle yapılandığını vurgular; aileden arkadaşlarımıza, hatta yurttaşlarımıza kadar her biri kültürü kişileştirir, toplumu sembolize eder ve tarihi barındırır. Bununla birlikte alegori sadece dışı doğru değil içe doğru da ilerler; örneğin yalnızca belli kuramsal geçmişleri ve güncel sonuçları olan akademik disiplin anlamında bilimler hakkında değil, sosyal öneme sahip ve kamu yararına olan bilimler hakkında da düşünmeyi gerektirir. Her ne kadar gizli ve dolaylı bir şekilde ifade edilse de bilim de öznelidir (Shapin 2010).

Alegori, öğretmenin dersteki etkileşimi nasıl başlatacağını planladığı öğretim planları yapması ve bunların eğitim programlarına aktarmasıyla başlar. Öğretmenin ne yapmak istediği üzerinde düşünmesi elbette faydalıdır ancak "eğitim programı hedefleri" o kadar da önemli değildir. Alegori öğrencilerin kendilerine verilen bilgiden anladıkları şeyle biter ki bu da genelde pek ortadan kalkan bir durum olmadığı gibi kesinlikle öğretmene bağlı bir durum da değildir. Eğer öğretmenler sınıflarındaki öğrencilerle ilgili öznel bilgilerinden yola çıkarak hareket etmezlerse öğrencileri dersle ilgilenmeye zorlamak bile otokratik bir hal alabilir. Öznel yeniden yapılandırma günümüz içerisinde geçmişin aktif hale getirilmesiyle olur; alegorinin çabası budur.

Öznel eğitim programlarını uygulamaya koymak açısından, tarihsel olarak ayarlanmış konuşma akademik bilgiyi kişinin kendisiyle ilişkilendirmesi anlamına gelir; örneğin sadece tarihi bilginin ne olduğunun öğretilmesi değil aynı zamanda tarihi anlamda şimdinin kişinin kendisi tarafından oluşturulmasının olası sonuçlarının neler olabileceği hakkında da fikirlerin paylaşılması gibi etkinlikler o bilginin bireyin sosyal bir varlık olmasını yönlendirmesini sağlar. Böyle yapmak, özneliğin çalışmalar sonucunda bulduğumuz sosyal formlar ve entellektüel yapılar aracılığıyla sürekli ve gizli şekilde işlenmesi demektir, ki bu da dünyada gerçekten bir şeyler yapabilmek adına sahip olduğumuz o eski hayallerimizi yeniden canlandırır.

Prosedürler ve prensipler önemli olmakla birlikte bugünün yapılarının arasından kendi yolunuzu bulmadıkça, geleceğe uzanan yolu da bulamayız. Geçmişini yeniden canlandırmak günümüzü yeniden yapılandırır ve böylelikle de gelecek bulunur. Tek bir dünya var ve onu paylaşıyoruz; kosmopolitanlığın geliştirilmesi farklılıklara karşı hoşgörülü olmanın ve hatta misafirperverliğin pekiştirilmesi bu dünyadaki varlığımızı sürdürmemiz açısından son derece önemli; ancak, tüm bunların eğitim programlarının standartlaştırılması gayretlerine maruz bırakılması gerekir mi; aksine eğitim programı tüm bu sebeplerden dolayı farklılaşması gerekir, standart olmaması daha iyidir, çünkü geçmişin mirasını yaşatmak geleceği bulmamızı kolaylaştırır.

Eğitim programları ilgili en kritik soru olan *en değerli bilgi* nedir sorusu ahlak, tarih ve siyasetle ilgilidir. Tarihi anın yalınlığı ve kişinin bireyselliğinin tekilliği yine kişinin çalıştığı ve de öğrettiği tarih, şiir, bilim ve teknoloji gibi konular aracılığıyla söze döküldüğünden dolayı bu soru önemini daima korumaktadır. Kişinin öznelliğini akademik bilgi aracılığıyla ifade etmesi, uygulanan program planlanan eğitim programı ile ilişkilendirilmesi, akademisyenlerin öğrencilerle konuşabileceğinin ve aslında akademisyenliğin öğrencileri nasıl konuşturabildiğinin gösterilmesidir. Henüz gelmemiş bir zaman dilimi için şu anla uyumlu olmak adına hiç bir boş soyutlama yapılmamıştır; gelecek şu anda ve buradadır. Yaygın bir bugüncülük ve narsisizm döneminde geleceği bulmak pek kolay değildir. Aslına bakarsanız, gelecek hiç bir zaman önümüzde değil ardımızdadır. Geçmişini canlandırmak günümüzü yeniden yapılandırır ve gelecek ancak bu şekilde bulunabilir. Böylesi bir alegorik sorumluluk günümüzün eğitim programı tasarım ve geliştirme çabalarının belirleyicisi olmalıdır.